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The Midland Naturalist

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Editorial Announcement.

The Middle Western States considered geologically, topographically, and climatologically, form a great natural province, showing points of marked contrast with the region of the Eastern and Middle States on the East, and that of the elevated Rocky Mountain Plains on the West ; in some respects connecting the two, yet geographically distinct from both.

Our region of the Prairies, including as it does the several states which in some part touch the shores of Lakes Michigan and Superior, together with the land-locked Missouri and Iowa, and extending westward only to the middle part of Kansas or Nebraska and of the Dakotas, from the days that it first began to be known, a hundred years ago and more, has been noted as geographically a peculiar region. The distribution of the diverse forms of living things in nature is largely governed by geographic limitation. Every continent, and every subdivision of every continent, has its own kinds of plants and animals. Biological types are modified and diversified according to circumstances of topography, soil, climate; and our prairie country was noted from the first as the habitat of certain animals and plants not found at all in the region from the Allegheny Mountains eastward, nor yet in the South beyond the Ohio River.

In zoology we have no descriptive handbooks readily available showing the peculiarities of Midland animal life and form, but in botany happily it is otherwise. Here the earliest manuals credit many peculiar and interesting type-plants to the region of the prairies exclusively. In the earlier issues of Alphonso Wood's and Asa Gray's familiar books, such types as the following are attributed to no part of the United States but the Prairie States of the valley of the upper Mississippi and westward :

* April 15, 1909. — Pages 1 to 28.

<i>Anemone Nuttalliana</i> ,	<i>Argemone platycerus</i> ,
“ <i>Caroliniana</i> ,	<i>Draba cuneifolia</i> ,
“ <i>parviflora</i> ,	<i>Erysimum asperum</i> ,
<i>Ranunculus affinis</i> ,	<i>Thelypodium pinnatifidum</i> ,
“ <i>rhomboideus</i> ,	<i>Cleome integrifolia</i> ,
<i>Clematis Pitcheri</i> ,	<i>Viola pedatifida</i> ,
“ <i>Fremonti</i> ,	“ <i>Nuttallii</i> ,
<i>Delphinium azureum</i> ,	<i>Geum triflorum</i> ,

All these are from the earliest pages of the old manuals, and, if we were to proceed to the Leguminosae, there we should find whole genera ascribed to the Prairie regions in this same way. There is *Baptisia* with six species, *Dalea* with four, *Petalostemon* with five, *Astragalus* with sixteen, *Oxytropis* with three, all these genera either fully represented to the eastward of Indiana, or not all; while such types as *Glycyrrhiza*, *Hoffmanseggia*, *Desmanthus*, and *Schrankia*, are unknown except from Illinois westward.

It is the most primitive books of the United States botany—those printed before the field of the Middle West had received anything more than casual notice—which thus show in the aggregate some scores of plant-types unknown to the eastward of Michigan and Indiana. Today there is evidence that a new era for middle western nature study is upon the dawn. At least as regards plant life and form it is tacitly conceded, if not openly, that the field was formerly too much neglected. Between the New Gray's Manual lately issued, and the earlier editions there are contrasts which tell strongly in favor of the idea that the Prairie Region plant world is a thing as much apart from that of New England and New York, as it is from that of the Gulf States. Compare this new edition of Gray with the sixth, which preceded it by less than twenty years. Up to within a few years, according to all the books, among the commoner trees there was one kind of wild crab-apple, *Pyrus coronaria*,—indigenous to the whole North all the way from New York across to Kansas and Minnesota. The latter proposition is that the above name formerly, and wrongly, was made to embrace two different species, *P. coronaria* of the Middle States and *P. Iowensis*, restricted to the Prairie Midland country. All except the most recent books tell of only one sort of Virginia Creeper—*Ampelopsis*—common from the shores of the Atlantic north and south to away beyond the Mississippi. The newest manual names four different kinds, two of which are characteristic of the Midland Section. Akin to the Crab-apple is the genus *Crataegus*, which according to the older standards, exhibited a number of species

ranging all across from the Atlantic to and throughout the Prairie Region, but now the newest book attributes to the Prairie States at least a dozen sorts as peculiar to this region.

Many another genus of trees is now of late represented as having species restricted to the Midland; and the like showing is made in the case of many an alliance of humbler plants. The Blue-eyed Grass, *Sisyrinchium*, in regard to which it was until lately taught in all the books, that there is no distinction between eastern kinds and middle-western kinds, it is now affirmed—and none question it—that no less than eight species are peculiar to the Prairie West, four of them,—*S. hastili*, *S. Farwellii*, *S. strictum*, and *S. apiculatum*, not having yet been found outside the State of Michigan.

The few examples thus brought forward may sufficiently indicate the suitability of our having here in the midst of this interesting and still new field, a journalistic medium of intercommunication and publication of Midland nature students, and this without thought of rivalry with old and well established journals, most of them general in their character and almost without local tinge.

Local journals such as the *Ottawa Naturalist*, *Rhodora*, the *Ohio Naturalist* and others all seem to have their mission and are fulfilling it well. The *Midland Naturalist*, while it may not hope soon to emulate the least of the foregoing, has certainly its own floral and faunal territory, and one that to the present time has remained unoccupied journalistically. In our investigations of biological and kindred subjects at Notre Dame we have for some time realized the desirability of having some ready medium of publication for matter appertaining to those branches of Natural History to which attention has been given. In this venture, therefore, we are meeting, first of all, a demand of our own. Though there is such a vast field for research on the plant and animal life of our Middle Western country, studies in general biological science and related subjects will not be excluded from our interest. Articles on General Morphology, Ecology, Histology, Physiology, Taxonomy, and the History of Botany and Zoology, etc., will at all times be welcomed to these pages. It is hoped, however, that the *Midland Naturalist* may meet with some welcome, and prove a stimulus and help to many a Midland nature student, not only in colleges and universities, but also to the equally interested and efficient workers in private life outside of schools.